United Nations

Daily Highlights

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FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General meets with President of India and Government officials in New Delhi; expresses condolences following deaths of Indian peace-keepers in Somalia last month.

+ Humanitarian organizations in Liberia appeal to warring factions to respect safety of relief workers as fighting escalates across country.

+ United Nations expresses concern as Bosnian and Croatian Serbs launch two-pronged attack against Bihac pocket.

+ WFP expands emergency relief operations in Haiti because of effects of economic sanctions on poor; says 2 million people, out of population of 6.5 million, are at risk.

+ Habitat/UNEP mission in Kigali begins planning for rehabilitation and reconstruction of Rwanda.

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Continuing his visit to India, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today met with several high-level officials, including President Shankar Dayal Sharma, Minister of State for External Affairs Salman Khursheed, Foreign Secretary K. Srinivasan, and Defence Minister M. Mallikarjun. Talks focused on the United Nations role in peace-keeping and India's contribution to peace-keeping operations.

The Secretary-General once more expressed his condolences following the recent killings of Indian troops and doctors serving with the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II). The Indian Government said that it would maintain its commitment in that country, and that it might contribute troops for Angola and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Also today, the Secretary-General delivered a lecture on "Current World Challenges as Reflected in the United Nations Today." This morning, he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the Mahatma Gandhi memorial in New Delhi.

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Humanitarian organizations working in Liberia today appealed to all warring factions to respect the safety and security of humanitarian institutions and relief workers, particularly Liberian nationals helping the civilian population. They said escalating levels of fighting across the country and the breakdown of law and order had made it impossible to reach those in need.

After an emergency meeting in Monrovia this morning, the humanitarian organizations reminded the warring factions and their supporters of their obligations under the Geneva Conventions and other international laws. They said those laws must be respected so that humanitarian operations could continue.

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A United Nations spokesman today expressed concern regarding intense fighting in the Bihac pocket in Bosnia and Herzegovina. He said that Bosnian Serbs were attacking from the south-east while Croatian Serbs were attacking from the north, and that those offensives were obviously coordinated.

The spokesman went on to say that cluster-bombs had been used by the Serbs and that civilians had been killed and injured. French troops serving with the United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) had been defusing bombs which failed to explode. Meanwhile, surface-to-air missiles had been fired at two British aircraft, but neither had been hit.

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The World Food Programme (WFP) is expanding its emergency relief operations in Haiti because of the "alarming effects" of tightened economic sanctions on the country's poorest and most vulnerable people, including returned refugees. The WFP has estimated that more than 2 million Haitians, out of a population of 6.5 million, are at risk. More than half the work force is unemployed and the loss of income has seriously affected the diets of the poor. Even before sanctions were imposed, Haiti had suffered a two-year drought and growing political unrest.

In one project, the WFP will provide daily rations to 100,000 Haitians for six months at a cost of more than $3 million. Most of the food will go to malnourished children, pregnant and nursing women and the elderly. This is the third phase of an operation that began providing food to 26,000 Haitians in 1992.

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The United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) have sent a mission to Kigali to prepare for the rehabilitation and reconstruction of Rwanda. The mission will draw up plans of action in five inter-related areas: urban infrastructure and housing; employment and the local economy; urban environment; environmental interaction between city and countryside; and urban management.

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Experts on urban infrastructure and housing will assess the damage caused by the recent conflict and consider how to repair roads, provide water and electricity, collect waste and improve the provision of health services. Specialists on the urban environment will examine environmental conditions with a view to protecting resources such as drinking water, and arranging for the disposal of waste.

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